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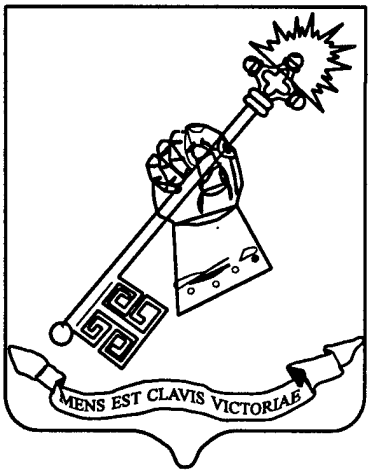
VIETNAM:
A Hiatus for the Operational Art?

A Monograph
By
Major Derek Miller
Infantry



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Abstract

VIETNAM: A HIATUS FOR THE OPERATIONAL ART?

by Major Derek Miller, USA, 55 Pages.

This monograph analyzes the American practice of the operational art during the Vietnam War. It focuses on Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) from 1965 to 1968. This question provides valuable relevant lessons to current military operations because of the difficulty in practicing operational art during the Vietnam War.

The monograph is organized into four parts. The first part is the introduction. The second part discusses what the operational art is according to current doctrine. It finds that operational art is the critical link between strategy and tactics. Operational art has two major components, linkage and design. For the operational art to be adequately practiced, both must be present. The third part analyzes MACV's conduct of the war. It traces U.S. strategic interests to tactical employment of military forces and reviews MACV's objectives and strategy. The fourth part is the conclusion. It compares MACV's conduct of the war from part three with current doctrine for the conduct of the operational art from part II.

The monograph finds that MACV did not adequately practice the operational art from 1965-1968. It determines that although there was linkage between U.S. strategic objectives and the tactical employment of troops, operational design lacked synchronization and integration. The monograph concludes that this failure to practice the operational art by MACV was a major contributing factor to the U.S. military failure in Vietnam, and subsequently U.S. strategic failure.

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Part I - Introduction

America's Army exists to deter war, but if deterrence fails, to fight and win the nation's wars.[1] Wars are not random acts of violence by rouges operating of their own accord. Wars are open conflicts waged by states or nations in pursuit of national interests.[2] The U.S. employs the military in conjunction with other instruments of national power to pursue strategic objectives. Employment of military forces may be in war or operations other than war, but national interests still drive how and when military forces are employed.

When the U.S. decides to use military forces, political leaders and U.S. citizens expect that military leaders will successfully achieve their assigned missions.[3] In the last 100 years American forces have achieved this goal in every war but one, Vietnam. Entry of U.S. forces in W.W.I tipped the scales in favor of the allies, ending the war on terms favorable to the U.S. In W.W.II American forces in conjunction with their allies brought the Axis Powers to their knees in unconditional surrender. In Korea U.S. forces bore the brunt of the effort which defeated the communist invasion of South Korea and reestablished the pre-war status quo. Most recently, U.S. led allied forces decisively defeated the Iraqi military, liberating Kuwait and restoring stability in the region.

Only in Vietnam, the longest of all American wars, did the U.S. fail to attain its strategic objectives. The United States committed half a million combat troops, lost over fifty-thousand lives, and spent billions of dollars fighting the war in Vietnam. The war tore the country apart internally and remains the source of wounds that have yet to heal. Despite the effort expended, South Vietnam fell to the enemy. The U.S. failed to achieve its strategic objectives.

Continual study of the Vietnam War is important to the U.S. military. The majority of U.S. military operations in the last 20 years and those likely in the near future bear greater similarities to the Vietnam War than they do to the other U.S. wars this century. The likelihood that near term future conflicts will be mid to high level conventional wars is low. Future and present conflicts will more frequently require cooperation of the military,

U.S. allies, other government agencies and non-government agencies to achieve success. Vietnam bears numerous relevant lessons for the employment of military forces to achieve strategic objectives.

Although the reasons for the American defeat in Vietnam were numerous and complicated, this monograph posits that one of the reasons is the failure of the U.S. military to practice the operational art. Military commanders employ the operational art to determine "when, where, and for what purpose major forces will fight over time."[4] This allows the operational commander to use military forces to attain strategic goals. In W.W.II and the Korean War military commanders designed successful campaigns in which successive military victories led to attaining strategic objectives. Such was not the case in Vietnam. In Vietnam operational art was on hiatus.

This monograph examines the question of whether Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) practiced the operational art during operations in Vietnam from 1965-1968. It finds that although some of the elements of operational art were present, U.S. commanders did not adequately synchronize and integrate military operations in order to achieve U.S. strategic objectives. This failure to apply operational art is in part responsible for the U.S. failure in Vietnam.

This monograph is organized into four parts. The first part introduces the thesis and methodology. The second part discusses what operational art is and how to evaluate its application. The third part discusses and analyzes the conduct of the Vietnam War at the operational level. It traces the linkage from strategic objectives through the employment of military forces and analyzes how military forces were used in pursuit of operational objectives. The final section evaluates MACV's use of military forces against the criteria established for the conduct of operational art.

The purpose of this monograph is to analyze operational art in Vietnam using contemporary standards and definitions. This monograph considers current doctrine, rather than doctrine from the 1960s in its analysis of operational art. It is not the goal of this

paper to determine if the doctrine of the 1960s was valid, or if it was properly practiced. The goal is to assess current doctrine by applying it to the Vietnam War.

Part II - The Operational Art

Introduction

The current doctrinal definition from Joint Pub 3.0 defines the operational art as:

> The employment of military forces to attain strategic and/or operational objectives through the design, organization, integration, and conduct of strategies, campaigns, major operations, and battles. Operational art translates the joint force commander's strategy into operational design, and, ultimately, tactical action, by integrating the key activities of all levels of war.[5]

The operational art owes its modern origins to the relationship between war and state policy. General Carl von Clausewitz, a 19th century military theorist, wrote ". . . it is clear that war should never be thought of as something autonomous but always as an instrument of policy. . ."[6] This essentially means that wars are fought to achieve the policy goals of the state and are not isolated acts in and of themselves. Wars are fought to achieve political ends. In the age of Napoleon and prior, battles were decisive. The massed armies of nations would meet on the field of battle and usually decide the battle and the outcome of the war in a single day. Monarchs or heads of state frequently led their armies in battle. The winner would make his demands, and the vanquished, his army destroyed, would surrender to the political demands of victor.

By the mid-19th century armies had become so large and operated over such large areas that they could rarely be defeated in a single decisive battle as they had during the wars of Napoleon. War and generalship had become so complicated that heads of state could no longer lead their armies in the field and still attend to their other political duties. This elusiveness of decisive battle that followed the Napoleonic era of warfare spawned the development of the operational art. To defeat the enemy army and achieve political aims through the use of military force, it became necessary for military leaders to plan campaigns that consisted of numerous simultaneous or consecutive battles. This planning and linking together of various military instruments in such a way that they eventually achieve the desired political objectives is the essence of the operational art.

War is still a tool of national policy to achieve strategic objectives, but it has become even more complicated. Today efforts of the military, other government agencies, and allies must be carefully synchronized and integrated to achieve strategic objectives. Operational art is the key to doing this. Joint Pub 3.0 states that:

> Modern warfare requires a synchronized effort to achieve objectives in the face of a wide range of threats. The integration of all US military capabilities--often in conjunction with forces from other nations, other US agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and United Nations forces and capabilities--is required to generate decisive joint combat power. JFCs synchronize these capabilities and contributions in time, space, and purpose.[7]

There are two key concepts behind operational art, linkage and design. Linkage ensures that military forces are employed so their action directly contributes to the overall strategic objectives sought. Proper design synchronizes and integrates U.S. and allied, military, and non-military efforts to ensure a synergistic approach toward achieving strategic and operational objectives. Linkage and design are discussed in the following sections.

Linkage

When a nation commits military forces, it commits them with the intent of achieving a political aim. The political aim of a nation is defined by its strategic objectives. For military forces to be employed in the most efficient manner, their actions should directly relate to the political aim sought. Employing military forces so their actions are linked to achieving strategic objectives is the overriding aim of operational art. "Without operational art, war would be a set of disconnected engagements, with relative attrition the only measure of success or failure."[8] The operational art is the method and process by which military commanders determine when, where and how to fight to achieve the desired outcome. By using the operational art as a "mental framework," military commanders are able to design campaigns and major operations, and "use resources efficiently and effectively to achieve strategic objectives."[9]

In the pre-Napoleonic era, heads of state led their armies. There was little difference between strategic level decisions and tactical actions; in many cases, the objectives were the

same. As war became more complicated and the monarch or head of state no longer led the army directly, the aims of war were not achieved in a single day, and other instruments of power besides the military were used by states to wield influence. These developments led to the theoretical division of war on different levels. These levels are strategic, operational and tactical.

The strategic level of war is practiced by a country's national leadership and involves actually producing strategy to achieve national objectives. The strategic level of war is not limited to military means. It may include the military or other instruments of national power. Joint Pub 3.0 describes the strategic level of war as:

> The level of war at which a nation, often as a member of a group of nations, determines national or multinational (alliance or coalition) strategic security objectives and guidance, and develops and uses national resources to accomplish these objectives. Activities at this level establish national and multinational military objectives; sequence initiatives; define limits and assess risks for the use of military and other instruments of national power; develop global plans or theater war plans to achieve those objectives; and provide military forces and other capabilities in accordance with strategic plans.[10]

The operational level of war is the level that links the strategic and tactical levels. The operational level of war is necessary to ensure that tactical actions are planned and coordinated to support the strategic objectives sought. Without a good linkage between tactical level actions and strategic goals, war becomes less of an instrument of policy and more of an autonomous action of random violence. Joint Pub 3.0 describes the operational level of war as:

> The operational level links the tactical employment of forces to strategic objectives. The focus at this level is on operational art--the use of military forces to achieve strategic goals through the design, organization, and execution of campaigns and major operations. Operational art determines when, where, and for what purpose major forces will be employed and should influence the enemy disposition before combat. It governs the deployment of those forces, their commitment to or withdrawal from battle, and the arrangement of battles and major operations to achieve operational and strategic objectives.[11]

The tactical level of war is the level where military forces actually fight battles and engagements. The tactical level focuses on the "ordered arrangement and maneuver of combat elements in relation to each other and the enemy."[12] Tactical actions that do not support the overall strategic goals are superfluous and wasteful. Commanders fight tactical battles to achieve specific tactical objectives. The operational commander assigns tactical objectives, the aggregate of which achieve operational results.[13] Joint Pub 3.0 describes the tactical level of war as follows:

> Tactics is the employment of units in combat. It includes the ordered arrangement and maneuver of units in relation to each other and/or to the enemy in order to use their full potential. Tactics are employed to fight and win engagements and battles. An engagement is normally short in duration and fought between small forces, such as individual aircraft in air-to-air combat. Engagements include a wide variety of actions between opposing forces in the air, on and under the sea, or on land. A battle consists of a set of related engagements. Battles typically last longer; involve larger forces such as fleets, armies, and air forces; and could affect the course of a campaign.[14]

Commander's employ operational art to ensure that tactical actions are not isolated actions, but rather contribute as part of the overall effort to achieve strategic objectives. The operational art links these three levels of war, strategic, operational and tactical to ensure that actions at each level are connected in one coordinated effort, and military actions are not a set of wasteful disjointed engagements.

Successful military operations alone are not sufficient to pursue national objectives. A nation has other options beside military action to pursue its national security strategy. These options are known as the instruments of national power. There are four instruments of national power, diplomatic, economic, informational and military. When a nation pursues foreign policy, it can use any or all of these instruments to attain its desired outcome. Frequently, the different instruments of national power will work in conjunction with one another to achieve the national strategic objectives.[15] This means that the military is rarely in a situation where it is the only instrument of national power being employed, and therefore must coordinate with and rely on other agencies to achieve overall success. Joint Pub 3.0 discusses coordination with other agencies in the chapter on operations other than

war, however, it applies in war also. It was particularly important in the Vietnam War, where multiple instruments of national power were employed simultaneously:

> The instruments of national power may be applied in any combination to achieve national strategic goals in operations other than war. The manner in which they are employed is determined by the nature of each situation. For operations other than war, the military instrument is typically tasked to support the diplomatic instrument, working with the economic and informational instruments.[16]

> Military commanders need to consider how their actions contribute to initiatives that are also diplomatic, economic, and informational in nature. Because operations other than war will often be conducted at the small unit level, it is important that all levels understand the military-civilian relationship to avoid unnecessary and counter-productive friction.[17]

Unity of command may not always be possible in interagency and multinational operations.[18] To ensure unity of effort, the commander must have a clear understanding of the strategic objectives and the military's role in achieving those objectives. By coordination and cooperation with other agencies he can ensure unity of effort. Military operations must compliment the efforts of the other instruments of national power when they work together to achieve the same operational and strategic objectives. To fully achieve linkage to strategic objectives, military operational objectives must be integrated with other instruments of national power so they work in conjunction with one another.

Operational Design

> The challenge for supported JFCs [Joint Force Commanders] is to integrate and synchronize the wide range of capabilities at their disposal into full dimensional operations against the enemy.[19]

Operational design determines how the commander synchronizes and integrates all facets of military operations to produce the conditions which will achieve strategic and operational objectives. To synchronize means to "operate in unison."[20] To integrate is to "make into a whole by bringing all parts together; unify."[21] The commander must synchronize and integrate resources so they all they work together to achieve the same desired objectives. The commander seeks to achieve synergy by designing operations to

maximize the capabilities of each element of the force, and apply them so their effects are complimentary. Synchronizing and integrating efforts prevents resources from pursuing disparate courses of action, diluting combat power and effect.

> The synergy achieved by synchronizing the actions of air, land, sea, space, and special operations forces in joint operations and in multiple dimensions enables JFCs to project focused capabilities that present no seams or vulnerabilities to an enemy to exploit.[22]

To achieve synchronization, the commander must design operations to focus resources in time, space and purpose. This means that resources should be applied so their use is complimentary to other resources thereby gaining the maximum benefit from all resources collectively and simultaneously, rather than a piecemeal and disjointed application. To be properly synchronized, they must be applied to achieve complimentary objectives at the right time an place. Commanders achieve this synchronization by using the operational art, "through the design, organization, integration, and conduct of strategies, campaigns, major operations, and battles."[23]

When commanders plan a sequence of battles and engagements to achieve a strategic or operational objective, it is known as a campaign. At the operational level of war, commanders develop campaign plans which describe "how these operations are connected in time, space, and purpose."[24] Campaign planning is central to the operational art. Campaign plans provide the guidance enabling subordinate units to conduct operations that are complimentary to the overall purpose. Campaign plans are the product of the operational art. Joint Pub 3.0 describes a campaign as:

> . . . a series of related joint major operations that arrange tactical, operational, and strategic actions to accomplish strategic and operational objectives. A campaign plan describes how these operations are connected in time, space, and purpose. Within a campaign, major operations consist of coordinated actions in a single phase of a campaign and usually decide the course of the campaign.[25]

Commanders design campaigns to synchronize and integrate their operations. Properly developed campaign plans "synchronize air, land, sea, space, and special

operations as well as interagency and multinational operations."[26] Campaign plans allow the commander to achieve the effect of synergy by focusing all elements of the joint force in time, space and purpose. This allows for maximum efficiency, and ensures that the entire effort works towards the same goal. The commander also achieves synchronization by "establishing command relationships among subordinate commands, by describing the concept of operations, by assigning tasks and objectives, and by task organizing assigned forces."[27]

The commander also synchronizes and integrates operations by determining the order in which they will take place. "This arrangement will often be a combination of simultaneous and sequential operations to achieve the desired end-state conditions quickly and at the least [cost] in personnel and other resources."[28] By arranging sequential and simultaneous operations, the commander can link operations to support one another. The effect of the individual operation is less important than its effect on the whole. Operations whether sequential or simultaneous must compliment each other, and be integrated so when taken together they produce the desired effect. Desynchronized operations present the enemy with an opportunity to defeat them piecemeal and are wasteful of resources.

Summary

The operational commander employs military forces to achieve strategic objectives through use of the operational art. The operational art ensures linkage between the employment of military forces and strategic objectives. It also ensures that military forces work together with other instruments of national power to ensure unity of effort toward achieving strategic objectives. Through operational design, the commander accomplishes synchronization and integration to achieve a synergistic effect ensuring that all elements work together toward a common goal. Adequate application of operational art achieves both proper linkage and design.

The following analysis of MACV's practice of the operational art concentrates on whether linkage and design were present during the planning and execution of operations in

Vietnam from 1965 to 1968. The analysis considers if MACV applied operational art by answering two questions: 1. Was MACV's employment of military forces in Vietnam linked to achieving strategic objectives? 2. Did MACV's operational design in Vietnam synchronize and integrate military operations to achieve operational and strategic objectives?

Part III - Operational Art in Vietnam

A Brief History of the U.S. Involvement in Vietnam

U.S. policy in Indochina went through several revisions from the end of the Second World War through increasing U.S. involvement in the 1960s. Initially, President Roosevelt opposed the return of French colonialism to Indochina.[29] U.S. policy encouraged independence and self-determination for all former European colonies. The fear of world-wide communist domination following W.W. II was responsible for changing this position.

The belief that communism was being spreading throughout the world at the direction of Moscow led the U.S. to support governments that would assist in stemming the spread of communism. The initial involvement of U.S. forces in Vietnam was in support of the French military operations against the Viet Minh, a group of communist supported Vietnamese nationalists. The Viet Minh, under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, fought the Japanese for the duration of their W.W.II occupation of Vietnam and were experienced and well equipped for their war with the French. The French returned to Vietnam following W.W.II and attempted to reestablish their colonial empire. The Viet Minh desired independence for Vietnam opposed the return of the colonials.[30] Although the U.S. did not completely agree with the French policy in Indochina and would not commit combat troops to aid the French, the U.S. provided substantial logistical and monetary support. By 1954 the U.S. was bearing three-quarters of the cost of the French war in Indochina.[31]

The French war with the Viet Minh lasted until 1954 when the communists encircled, besieged and destroyed the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu. Unwilling to continue the war, the French signed an agreement with the Viet Minh in July of 1954.[32] The agreement, called the Geneva Accords, partitioned Vietnam between a communist north and non-communist south. The division was intended as a temporary measure pending a referendum between North and South in 1956 that would determine the leadership of the country.[33]

U.S. military involvement in Vietnam officially began in September of 1950 when a small military assistance and advisory group (MAAG) was established in Saigon. The MAAG was established as a result of the 1 May 1950 decision by President Truman to support the French in Indochina. Responsibilities of the U.S. group were logistic in nature. The French continued to perform all combat and training missions until their 1954 defeat by the Viet Minh.[34]

When French leadership in Vietnam declined following the Geneva Accords, U.S. involvement increased. By 1956 virtually all French military and non-military advisors had left the country. This left a huge leadership vacuum in South Vietnam. The French officials had run virtually all facets of Vietnamese government, including both military and civil agencies. Their departure left the inexperienced Vietnamese in a difficult position while trying to establish their new country. The new president, Ngo Dinh Diem declared South Vietnam an independent republic, the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), in late 1955.[35]

Desiring to stem the spread of communism and bolster the budding South Vietnamese democracy and economy, the U.S. began spending billions of dollars to support the Diem government in Saigon. When the Diem government refused to participate in the 1956 re-unification elections specified by the Geneva Accords, his actions were supported by the United States.[36] By the end of the decade, the U.S. was supporting South Vietnam with economic, diplomatic, informational and military instruments of power.

U.S. Strategic and Military Objectives in Vietnam

Four strategic objectives guided U.S. policy in Vietnam from 1965-1968. The first three objectives applied not only to U.S. policy toward Vietnam, but to global U.S. policy. The fourth applied to Vietnam, but was both influenced by and impacted on U.S. global policy. The following list is a general summary of the major U.S. objectives synthesized from several sources:[37]

1. To contain the spread of communism to its current geographic boundaries, by preventing non-communist countries from falling to communism by either internal or external threats, including South Vietnam.

2. To build and maintain confidence in the ability and willingness of the United States to protect her allies in the Asian-Pacific region, and worldwide.

3. To avoid general war with the Soviet Union and/or Communist China.

4. Advance South Vietnam as a politically and economically stable autonomous nation state, capable of defending herself from external military threats.

These four strategic objectives guided U.S. policy in regard to Vietnam. Each instrument of national power had a role to play in achieving the U.S. strategic objectives in Vietnam. The military instrument of power had a role in all four strategic objectives, although never an autonomous role. The following discussion will consider each U.S. strategic objective and the military's role in achieving it.

Objective One -- Contain the Spread of Communism

The first objective, to contain the spread of communism to its current geographic boundaries, arose from the U.S. fear of global communism. In the polarized world that emerged following W.W.II. fear of monolithic communist expansion dominated the minds of western political leaders. The philosophy was termed the "Domino Theory," after the idea that countries would "fall" to communism one after another, like a row of dominos.[38] Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon were all adherents to this theory.[39] The dominant political approach to countering the "Domino Theory" was containment, the idea of containing or holding communism to its current geographic boundaries by the integrated use of all instruments of national power. The diplomatic instrument of national power worked to build strong governments that were both stable and responsive to the needs of their citizens. Economic power was used in the form of foreign aid to bolster economies and further political and economic growth.[40] The policy of containment is the major overarching strategic objective that led to our military involvement in Indochina.[41]

Containment was an integrated diplomatic, economic, military and informational campaign for the entire western world. The military was the force behind the policy. It physically held communism in place in some cases (like western Europe and Korea), and assisted other nations in defending themselves against communist takeover in others. This was the case initially in Vietnam. Vietnam was not the only place that containment policy

was being practiced, nor was it the only place the military was involved. It was the center stage for the battle against communist surrogates, and it was a test of the U.S./Western resolve to contain communism.

Objective Two -- Maintain Confidence in U.S. Ability and Resolve

The second strategic objective was to build and maintain confidence in the ability and willingness of the United States to protect her allies in the Asian-Pacific region, and worldwide. As a current world leader it is important that the United States maintain the faith of her allies to honor treaties, alliances and agreements whether formal or informal. It is equally important that when the United States fulfills her commitments, that she is able to do so successfully. A perceived lack of willingness or inability of the United States to fulfill commitments or support allies will lead to a break down in trust of the United States, and subsequent decrease in international influence.[42] This is no less true today than it was in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Deeply embroiled in the cold war, it was important to the United States and Western powers to convince other nations to align with the West. The faith of these nations in the ability of the United States and other Western powers to support and protect them was integral to attracting them to the Western sphere of influence. The United States perceived that our support and protection of Vietnam, a small nation struggling against communism, served as an example of American resolve and ability to the rest of the world.

The military played an important role in maintaining faith in the U.S. willingness and ability to support its allies. Willingness to support allies was a policy decision. The ability to support and protect allies was largely a military mission, especially for countries faced with overt military threats. Other instruments of national power were important, and U.S. economic, diplomatic, and informational support were greatly sought after, although commitment of military forces is a greater demonstration of resolve than diplomatic or economic support. The relevance to Vietnam is that the willingness of the U.S. to commit military forces, and the ability of those forces to protect Vietnam was closely watched by

both communist and non-communist countries. It was a thermometer of U.S. resolve and capability.

Objective Three -- Avoid General War

The third strategic objective was to avoid general war with the Soviet Union and/or Communist China. Despite a desire to contain the spread of communism, the United States wished to do this without the eruption of general war. By the mid-1960s both major communist powers possessed nuclear weapons, ending the former U.S. monopoly. The general belief among military and political leaders was that any conventional war with the Soviet Union (USSR) would escalate to a nuclear conflict, which was to be avoided at all costs.[43] Recent memories of the Korean War led American leaders to shun the possibility of land war in Asia with the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), particularly with the 1964 addition of atomic weapons to her arsenal. The desire to avoid general war led the United States to pursue international policy with great caution. This concern placed limitations on American foreign policy and the use of military forces in order to avoid direct confrontation or provocation of either the USSR or PRC which might lead to general war.

Avoiding general war with the USSR and PRC was primarily a diplomatic issue, however, the military had a two fold role in this objective. The first was to maintain a high state of conventional and nuclear readiness, discouraging war through a credible deterrent posture. The second was to prevent escalation by avoiding confrontation or provocation of the communist nations. The requirement to prevent escalation placed limitations on the use of military force that impacted on operational design. This later role was to play a key part in the Vietnam war. The desire to limit confrontation and provocation led U.S. political leaders to place limitations and constraints on the means that the military could use in Vietnam. Although limitations would change moderately during the war, they basically restricted ground combat to South Vietnam only, prohibited the use of nuclear weapons, and limited air and naval actions against North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Although the military role in this strategic objective was only one of restraint as it applied to Vietnam, it

had a tremendous impact on the conduct of the war by limiting the options of military leaders.

Objective Four -- Stabilize Vietnam

The last strategic objective, to advance South Vietnam as a politically and economically stable autonomous nation state, capable of defending herself from external military threats, did not apply solely to South Vietnam. Since the end of W.W.II. it was the policy of the U.S. to support freedom and self-determination for all nations, including those which were part of European colonial empires. This policy changed over time. Following W.W.II the policy was to support the return of the French to their pre-war colonial empire, but with the caveat that they would allow eventual self-determination.[44] Following the defeat and ouster of the French from Vietnam in 1954, the American position changed to support the provisions established in the Geneva Accords. This agreement divided Vietnam into two separate areas, north and south, and scheduled a national referendum for 1956 to vote on unification.[45]

Fearful of communist subversion of the elections, the United States supported South Vietnam in her boycott of the 1956 reunification referendum.[46] This action marked a change in policy for the United States. American policy now focused on supporting South Vietnam as an independent nation state. The United States attempted to use all instruments of national power to help build a strong government supported by the people, a strong economy which could support the state without outside aid, and strong security force capable of defending the nation from internal and external threats.[47] This policy remained essentially unchanged for the duration of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, although priorities would shift, and it would be practiced with varying degrees of success.

The military played a large role in this strategic objective, because the outcome was closely linked to both containment and faith in U.S. resolve and ability. If the U.S. were successful in supporting South Vietnam against communist aggression, it would bolster faith in the United States and contain communist expansion in Indochina. If Vietnam were

to fall, it could degrade both the objectives of containment and faith in the U.S. although not cause them to fail completely.

This objective required a concerted application of all instruments of national power. Economic power was necessary to bolster the flagging South Vietnamese economy, and finance her government programs and internal security programs. Diplomatic power was needed to gain support for the new republic, help train government leaders, limit communist aggression, and many other stability and security missions. Informational power was required to support U.S. policy objectives worldwide, and to aid military, diplomatic and economic instruments.[48] Military power was required to develop and maintain a secure environment in South Vietnam for other instruments of national power to work on developing political and economic stability.

The military instrument of power had a critical role in this objective. South Vietnam was in a virtual state of siege by both internal and external forces. Military power was required to provide a secure environment so the other instruments of national power would have a chance to work. Essentially this amounted to buying time until other instruments of national power could accomplish their objectives and Vietnam could stand on its own.[49] The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) defined two tasks that applied to this strategic objective: to "compel Hanoi to 'cease and desist' in the South," and to "defeat the Viet Cong in South Vietnam and extend government control over all of the South."[50] The first of these objectives would be the responsibility of the commander in chief of U.S. Pacific Command (CINCPAC) through the strategic bombing program; the latter would fall firmly on the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV).

Operational Art in Vietnam

The commander of MACV, GEN Westmoreland, defined two parts of this mission in his June 1965 concept of operations: 1. To secure the country from "from large well organized and equipped forces including those which may come from outside the country" and; 2. To secure the country from smaller internal threats such as guerrillas and terrorists.[51] A third role of the military instrument of power not stated in Westmoreland's concept of operations because it was already ongoing was to train, advise and prepare the South Vietnamese security forces to maintain the security of the country against internal and external threats. This mission was already ongoing when U.S. combat forces were introduced in 1965.

GEN Westmoreland's plan established the linkage of tactical actions to strategic objectives. His plan was to employ his forces to achieve three separate military objectives: 1. to secure the country from large well organized forces; 2. to secure the country from smaller guerrilla and terrorist threats; and 3. to prepare the South Vietnamese security forces to secure the country themselves. MACV contributed to all four strategic objectives. MACV would physically contain communism from expanding to South Vietnam. Accomplishment of this objective would serve as an example to the rest of the world of U.S. resolve and ability. Westmoreland's operations were limited to South Vietnam to reduce the probability of confrontation with the USSR or PRC which could escalate into general war. According to the JCS plan for the use of military force, MACV was to defeat the Viet Cong and extend government control throughout the South. As North Vietnamese Army (NVA) units began to operate more frequently in the South, MACV would defeat them also. This would support the strategic objective of advancing South Vietnam as a politically and economically stable nation state.

There are three basic phases of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. These phases were not the result of design, but circumstance. Each phase of military involvement was precipitated by the failure of the previous phase. A major shift in U.S. strategic policy is responsible for transitioning to each subsequent phase. The first phase runs from the

withdrawal of the French military in 1956 to employment of U.S. combat forces in late 1964. This phase is characterized by U.S. forces assisting the Vietnamese in fighting their own battles, but no employment of U.S. forces in a direct combat role. The second phase begins with the decision to commit U.S. combat forces in 1965 and runs through the decision to begin withdrawal in 1968. This phase is characterized by U.S. forces conducting the majority of combat operations in the theater. The last phase runs from the decision to begin the program of Vietnamization in 1969 to the fall of Saigon in 1975. It is characterized by U.S. forces withdrawing and helping prepare the Vietnamese to conduct their own defense in the absence of U.S. military forces.

The Assistance and Advisory Phase 1956-1964

The initial phase of American involvement in Vietnam was predicated on helping the South Vietnamese help themselves. French colonialism had not prepared the Vietnamese for self rule. Political and military leaders lacked training and experience. The military itself was ill-prepared to defend the country against either conventional or unconventional threats.

The initial U.S. position in Vietnam had been one of economic assistance only. An initial MAAG was established in 1950 and had only 4 members. As French involvement waned, American involvement waxed, bringing MAAG to 342 advisors by 1954.[52] By 1959, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) had grown to seven divisions, and had American advisors down to regimental and battalion level.[53] Between 1954 and 1961 the number of U.S. advisors nearly tripled, to about 900 by 1961. The biggest increase came between 1961 and 1963, when U.S. forces increased to almost 17,000. Another major milestone in this period was the formation of MACV in February 1962.[54] The objective of MACV was to "assist the Government of Vietnam and its armed forces to defeat externally directed and supported communist subversion and aggression and attain an independent South Vietnam functioning in a secure environment."[55] In May 1964, MAAG "was abolished and its functions integrated with HQ MACV."[56]

American military advisors assisted in training and advising South Vietnamese military units. The U.S. military objective was to enable the South Vietnamese to satisfy their own security requirements.[57] The U.S. approach to deal with the threats faced by the RVN was to build a strong conventional army. The ARVN was designed in the image of U.S. units, and intended to be capable of defending the country against a conventional cross border attack similar to the Korean scenario.[58] American advisors lived with Vietnamese military units, and assisted Vietnamese commanders in training and conducting combat operations; however, U.S. military forces were prohibited from engaging in direct combat themselves. Although U.S. military advisors were not intended to engage in direct combat, U.S. forces were deployed to support Vietnamese forces. In 1961 U.S. helicopters began supporting the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) in airmobile operations.[59]

The ARVN had some success in these operations, but in early 1964, it was clear that the ARVN was not succeeding. ARVN units were being destroyed more rapidly than they could be reconstituted.[60] Enemy forces continued to increase their span of control, and their units became larger and more prevalent. By the end of 1964, the Viet Cong (VC) made regimental and division sized attacks against ARVN units and had begun attacking U.S. support bases in South Vietnam. In December 1964, the 9th VC division seized the village of Binh Gia.[61] Although the enemy continued to employ small guerrilla units and terrorists using hit and run tactics, the war had clearly escalated to include large organized enemy units seizing and holding ground in some areas.

Enemy successes and the escalation of the war in 1964 indicated that the current U.S. strategy was not working. The end result was that the U.S. government determined that the South Vietnamese government was incapable of stemming the tide of the communist insurgency without direct military assistance from the United States.[62] This determination set the stage for the introduction of U.S. forces in a combat role. One major event in 1964 brought the advisory phase to an end and established the legal basis for direct U.S. involvement. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, passed on 6 August, gave President Johnson defacto war powers.[63] The U.S. began bombing of strategic targets in the North

immediately after the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, and continued with only short breaks until the end of the war. From this point on, strategic bombing was the responsibility of CINCPAC, not MACV, although it was largely controlled by the President himself.[64]

The resolution also opened the door to deploy U.S. troops in other than an advisory role. U.S. political and military leaders had been debating the use of U.S. combat forces in Vietnam for several years. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and increased attacks on U.S. facilities in the RVN opened the flood gates for the massive deployment of U.S. combat forces in 1965, thus beginning new military objectives for the employment of U.S. military forces. The advisory phase ended when U.S. forces began to expand their role beyond training and advising the security forces of RVN to assume the role of physically defending the country against internal and external threats.

The Attrition Phase 1965-1968

The year 1965 heralded major changes in the U.S. approach to the Vietnam war, expanding the role of U.S. ground and air combat forces. The major factor that led to an expanded role for U.S. forces was the perceived inability of the South Vietnamese government and its armed forces to defend itself. For the first time the U.S. introduced major combat forces to engage in direct combat. MACV and the JCS believed that the superior firepower and mobility of U.S. forces would bring the war to an end in about three years; subsequently, the U.S. began to assume the primary combat role in Vietnam.[65] By 1968 the U.S. military contingent in Vietnam had grown to over half a million, but the war raged on with little hope of quick resolution. U.S. strategies to win the war had proven unsuccessful, and the strategy would have to change again.[66]

The first use of U.S. military forces in an autonomous combat role was the use of airpower in the retaliatory strikes following the Gulf of Tonkin incident. These strikes continued for six months as Operation Flaming Dart. The goal of these strikes was to punish North Vietnam for attacks on U.S. personnel, equipment and facilities. On 11 February 1965, both the mission and the name of air operations against North Vietnam changed. Operation Flaming Dart was discontinued and replaced by Operation Rolling

Thunder. Rolling Thunder was a continuous bombing program designed to stop the "pattern of aggression" by the North. Although initially planned to last for only 8 weeks, it continued until November 1968.[67]

Initially U.S. ground forces were deployed to protect U.S. facilities in the South. The first such deployment was a Marine battalion landing team which landed on the beach at Da Nang in March 1965.[68] March and April saw additional requests for the deployment of U.S. forces for use as both security forces, and forces to be used in offensive combat operations against the growing VC threat. In May the first major Army unit arrived in Vietnam, the 173rd Airborne Brigade.[69] By the end of the year U.S. forces in Vietnam had grown to 184,000.[70]

U.S. strength continued to mount from 1966 to 1968. By the end of 1968, MACV had seven Army and two Marine divisions, and six brigade sized elements, four Army and two Marine. Additionally, other nations participated as part of Free World Military Assistance Forces. These forces included two Korean divisions and a Marine brigade, two Australian regiments, and company sized elements from New Zealand, the Philippines and Thailand.[71]

Air forces in Vietnam included six tactical fighter wings, four tactical fighter squadrons, a reconnaissance and an airlift wing. Air forces responded to missions from both PACOM and MACV. Additional air forces participated in combat operation under the direct control of Strategic Air Command (SAC). Naval forces under MACV consisted of two riverine and river patrol task forces.[72] Additionally, a coastal surveillance task force supported PACOM and MACV operations. Other naval forces supported PACOM missions as needed.

JCS, PACOM and MACV commanders all believed that North Vietnam was the catalyst escalating the war in South Vietnam. They believed that the key to winning the war in the South was to force North Vietnam to stop supporting aggression in the South. Views on how to do this were varied, and changed over time. Initially, the strategy relied on the assumption that massive punishment by U.S. combat forces would cause Hanoi to

capitulate. The North Vietnamese would quit because they would be unwilling to suffer the punishment inflicted by U.S. forces, and they would realize they could not win against such overwhelming power.[73] This assumption proved faulty. North Vietnam increased its own deployments into South Vietnam to match U.S. force deployment, and CIA reports revealed that strategic bombing in the North was having little effect on the enemy's will to resist.[74] Like so many previous wars, decisive victory was more elusive than it seemed at the onset.

Now apparent that the mere presence of U.S. combat power would not end the war, the military leadership adopted a new approach. It was a two-pronged strategy that aimed at forcing North Vietnam out of the war, and defeating the enemy forces in South Vietnam. The first prong was the air war waged against targets in the North. The second prong was the ground war prosecuted by MACV in South Vietnam. The first prong was intended to force Hanoi to end their support of the war in the South; the second prong was intended to bleed them dry so they could not continue the war.

The primary objective of strategic bombing remained the same as it had been, to force Hanoi to end aggression against south Vietnam. The secondary objective was to support U.S. forces fighting in South Vietnam. Bombing was intended to deprive NVA and VC forces operating in the South from their source of reinforcements and war materiel in the North.[75] Bombing was intended to accomplish this by damaging North Vietnamese infrastructure, and interdicting the primary supply route to the South, the Ho Chi Minh trail.[76]

Despite the objective of forcing North Vietnam out of the war, severe limitations were placed on targets that could be bombed in the North. Fearing possible intervention by the USSR or PRC, and declining popular support of the war, targets were limited minimize damage to the major population and industrial centers of Hanoi and Haiphong. Control of strategic bombing still remained primarily with CINCPAC or SAC when B52s were employed, although actual target approval remained with President Johnson, and was not delegated outside the White House during his presidency.

Although the majority of targets submitted by CINCPAC were eventually bombed, the execution was gradual and lacked the shock effect envisioned in the CINCPAC plan.[77] This method of target selection continued throughout Johnson's Presidency and severely limited the flexibility of the military to prosecute the strategic bombing campaign as they desired. By the end of 1968, there was little evidence that the strategic bombing program had successfully contributed to either of its military objectives, getting Hanoi to withdraw support, or limiting significantly limiting the quantity of supplies reaching the south.

The basic strategy of the war in South Vietnam became one of attrition. The commander of MACV (COMUSMACV), GEN Westmoreland, believed that by aggressively attacking enemy forces in the South he could destroy their forces, materiel and supplies. Combined with the bombing program in the North, he felt this would eventually drive the North out of the war, and preclude their support of insurgent forces in the South. His basic concept of operations called for a three phase plan. The first phase would use 44 battalions to secure key U.S. and South Vietnamese facilities to stabilize the situation in 1965. The second phase would begin in 1966 with the addition of 24 more battalions to renew the offensive and take the war to the enemy. The final phase would be the mop-up of any remaining elements in 1967.[78]

Westmoreland saw two primary threats that military forces had to deal with. The first was from "large well organized and equipped forces" either from within or external to South Vietnam. The second was the threat consisting of small units such as "guerrillas and terrorists."[79] Westmoreland felt that the large well organized units were the greater threat, and the destruction of these forces would best suit U.S. firepower and mobility.

The main effort for Westmoreland's attrition strategy relied on employing U.S. ground and air forces in a search and destroy role. Search and destroy was a tactic geared at maximizing the superior firepower and mobility of U.S. forces to find large VC and NVA units and destroy them in battle. Of search and destroy tactics, GEN Westmoreland says in his book *A Soldier Reports,*

> . . . the operations were aimed at finding the enemy and eliminating his military installations - bunkers, tunnels, rice and ammunition caches, training camps, the essentials if his base camps and sanctuaries were to continue to provide havens from which he might emerge at times of this choosing to terrorize the people.[80]

By their nature, search and destroy missions were rarely centrally controlled. Vietnam was divided into four corps areas or zones that coincided with the four Vietnamese corps. Each zone had one U.S. corps size headquarters and units allocated under it. Units built base camps and patrolled the immediate area around these base camps.

> The region in the vicinity of each base camp constituted the unit's tactical area of responsibility, much as a unit in conventional warfare has a zone of advance. Unless called on to move else where to engage large enemy forces or penetrate enemy sanctuaries, the unit was to patrol its zone, bring the enemy to battle, and in the process help South Vietnamese forces provide security for government ministries and the National Police engaged in pacification. The unit was also to assist in training the ARVN and to perform civic action, promoting self-help projects with the people such as digging wells and building bridges, schools, dispensaries.[81]

Within the corps areas, U.S. forces would collect intelligence on known and suspected enemy units. When they identified suspected enemy locations, U.S. forces would attempt to destroy them through direct combat. Superior U.S. mobility and firepower usually resulted in tactical victories in most of these missions. Operations usually took place at division level and below, however, several multi-division operations were planned and executed at corps level. These missions included Operations Junction City, Cedar Falls, and Attleboro. These operations were intended to destroy large enemy operations bases in South Vietnam.[82] MACV neither planned or controlled these operations.[83] They were planned and executed by corps level headquarters in accordance with MACV's broad guidance. The decisions of when and were the operations would take place were actually determined by II Field Force.[84]

The basic tactic used in all these operations was to isolate an area suspected to be a VC/NVA stronghold, and move ground forces through the area to either destroy enemy forces or flush them into a waiting barrier. These missions met with mixed success. They proved that U.S. combat forces could win tactical battles against large enemy forces; they

also captured enemy supplies and destroyed enemy forces. Unfortunately, they consumed large amounts of manpower. They also pushed enemy bases over the border into Cambodia where they could no longer be hit by ground forces.[85] Additionally, although they initially cleared certain areas of enemy, allied forces were unable to maintain occupation forces to prevent reoccupation by the enemy. Enemy forces normally returned within six months.

These major operations did generally support MACV's military objective of defeating large units in South Vietnam, and indirectly affected the objective of defeating guerrilla and terrorist threats by attacking their support bases. Unfortunately, these operations were planned and executed at corps level and were not part of an overall integrated MACV campaign, rather they were a "strategy of tactics" to attrit the enemy however and wherever he could be found.[86]

MACV also used air and naval forces in their prosecution of the war, although they were not integrated into a focused operational plan or campaign. Naval forces were used in complementary operations, while air forces were used primarily in a fire support or interdiction role. The nature of the warfare precluded an independent air campaign in the South because targets were difficult to locate from the air, and difficult to distinguish from civilian targets. Air forces were used to interdict enemy supply lines in Laos and Cambodia, as well as just over the border in North Vietnam when massed enemy forces and supplies could be located.[87] The MACV area of responsibility for air operations stretched approximately 70 miles north of the DMZ into and area known as the "extended battle area."[88]

The primary approach to defeat the insurgency was known as pacification. Pacification attempted to assert government control throughout the country and separate the insurgents from their support base, the population. It was a complex process of securing geographic areas, searching and clearing them of insurgent forces, and establishing effective local government. Key to doing this was winning the "hearts and minds" of the population so they would support the new government.[89]

> Pacification is the very difficult process of establishing or reestablishing effective local self-government within the political framework of the legitimate central government and its constitution. Putting it the other way around, it aims to reassert lawful governmental control by removing the enemy's underground apparatus. It includes the provision of sustained and credible territorial security and the genuine, voluntary involvement of the people as well as the initiation of self-sustaining and expanding economic and social activity. The economic element of pacification includes the opening of roads and waterways and the maintaining of lines of communication important to economic and military activity.[90]

Vietnamese forces were primarily employed in the pacification mission for reasons of language, legitimacy, and capability.[91] Although U.S. concentrated primarily on big units in Westmoreland's attrition strategy, they assisted the ARVN in pacification also. Frequently, more U.S. forces were engaged in this mission than were employed fighting big units.[92] Despite the number of military units employed in pacification, it was not a solely military mission. It was a complex interagency mission that involved numerous U.S. and South Vietnamese government agencies. Because pacification lay at the heart of establishing a politically and economically stable South Vietnam, it was actually the primary mission in Vietnam:

> Pacification was the ultimate goal of both the Americans and the South Vietnamese government. A complex task involving military, psychological, political, and economic factors, its aim was to achieve an economically and politically viable society in which the people could live without constant fear of death or other physical harm.[93]

MACV was not directly responsible for the actions of non-military agencies in Vietnam. The American ambassador was the President's representative in country and responsible to develop an integrated approach using all instruments of national power to achieve strategic objectives. President Johnson specifically clarified that Ambassador Taylor's responsibilities would include the "whole military effort in South Vietnam" and authorized him to use the degree of command and control over the military he deemed appropriate.[94] Although the MACV commander said he understood this, he consistently fought to restrict civilian control his operations.

Ambassador Taylor made some initial strides to coordinate the various U.S. efforts in South Vietnam, but when he was replaced by Ambassador Lodge in 1965 the effort became fragmented again. Different agencies had separate chains of command and budgets with no one really in control of the whole process.[95] Ambassador Lodge and GEN Westmoreland disagreed over who should control the pacification effort. Lodge felt that it should be the embassy because pacification integrated all elements of national power, and it was the most important effort in Vietnam. Westmoreland felt that the military should control pacification because they would be able to do it better than civilian leadership. There was a major theoretical disagreement between the two over the "big unit strategy." Lodge felt that pacification was not progressing because Westmoreland was busy chasing big units and forsaking protection of the people. Westmoreland felt that he could not protect the people while they were threatened by big units.[96]

Westmoreland attempted several times to wrest control of the other agencies from the ambassador.[97] Although members of MACV coordinated with the American embassy, Westmoreland was perturbed when embassy officials, the Department of State or other government agencies got involved in military operations. He even resisted attempts by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs to provide input on MACV's strategy.[98]

GEN Westmoreland's intransigence hurt the overall U.S. effort. By failure to cooperate and build consensus with other government agencies, true linkage and integration to U.S. strategic objectives could never be established. In his book A Soldier Reports, GEN Westmoreland indicts himself for this lack of cooperation with civilian agencies, and his narrow focus on a military solution:

> Would I, a military man, presume to tell a team of surgeons how to operate? What special audacity prompted civilian bureaucrats to deem they knew better how to run a military campaign than did military professionals? Is no special knowledge or experience needed? Had the would-be strategists taken the trouble to examine my cable traffic with the Joint Chiefs or had they consulted General Wheeler, they would have had their answers many times over.[99]

Failure to cooperate and work together with other agencies led to military operations being disconnected from other efforts. Westmoreland responded to CINCPAC and the JCS prosecuting his own independent operations despite repeated requests to integrate and synchronize with other government agencies. The disagreement over who would control pacification was not solved until mid-1967 when President Johnson succumbed to Westmoreland's desires and placed all responsibilities for pacification under MACV.[100] This lack of cooperation between U.S. agencies cost two years of potential progress while agencies pursued disparate courses of action.

In addition to fighting the enemy big units and assisting the ARVN in pacification, U.S. forces also had the task to train and strengthen the ARVN.[101] U.S. advisors continued to work with ARVN units and advise Vietnamese commanders. ARVN soldiers and leaders were taught at U.S. schools and equipped with U.S. materiel. They executed their military missions using American doctrine and tactics. Vietnamese units received support from U.S. aircraft and helicopter gunships. This mission assumed a low priority in MACV until July 1967 when President Johnson decided to limit further deployment of U.S. troops. This placed greater importance on the role of the ARVN in the expanding war. When MACV began to place "renewed" emphasis on preparing the ARVN the process was slow to develop. It was not until late 1967 that ARVN units were equipped with the new M-16 rifle, and it was well into 1968 for larger pieces of equipment like artillery, vehicles, mortars, etc.[102]

Through the end of 1968, MACV generally relied on the commanders of each of the corps zones to police their own area and destroy enemy forces when they were found. MACV supported the corps commanders by distributing resources and continuing to push for more forces. The problem with this method was that rather than a centrally planned campaign which took the war to the enemy, the strategy ceded the initiative to the enemy.[103] Political restrictions prevented U.S. ground forces from entering Cambodia or Laos where they enemy kept units, supplies and training bases. The enemy could usually not be attacked unless they chose to be. This allowed them to control their loss rate, and disrupt

the attrition strategy. They were able to commit only the units to combat that they were prepared to lose.

Fortunately, the enemy came to the rescue of a deficient strategy in early 1968. Believing that they had sufficient forces to inflict major physical and psychological losses on allied forces, the VC launched their largest offensive of the war beginning on 30 January. By bringing battle to the U.S. forces, the enemy fought the decisive battle that MACV had wanted since the introduction of U.S. combat forces. Although U.S. forces accepted heavy losses, they inflicted over eight times as many losses on the enemy. MACV estimated VC losses as high as 40,000.[104] Additionally, the Tet offensive allowed a concerted drive by U.S. forces to destroy the weakened and exposed enemy structure in the South and resulted in enemy losses totaling as high as 120,000 over the six months following Tet according to MACV estimates.[105]

Although the Tet Offensive had not been planned by U.S. forces, at the tactical level it produced an unintended victory which left the VC no choice but to abandon fighting with large units and return to primarily guerrilla and terrorist tactics. At the strategic level it had another impact. Growing U.S. discontent over the war was further fueled by Tet. American citizens and political leaders were shocked that the enemy was capable of launching so ferocious an assault after being told by military leaders in Vietnam that the war was nearly won. This perceived deliberate misinformation destroyed the credibility of GEN Westmoreland, and enlarged the growing schism between the military and the American people. Despite the tactical victory that resulted from enemy's Tet Offensive, the military's credibility was severely damaged. Any consideration of further forces to capitalize on the victories of Tet did not meet political realities. Political realities were that the American people and their political leadership were no longer willing to pursue a war which seemed endless and unwinable.[106]

The Handover Phase 1969-1975

The final phase of American military involvement in Vietnam was precipitated by the failure of military forces to appreciably stem the tide of communist aggression against the

South from 1965-1968. By the end of 1968 most military and political leaders had come to the conclusion that the current strategy in Vietnam was not working, or at least not working fast enough.[107] Perhaps the most visible manifestation of this belief was from GEN Abrams, the deputy commander of MACV. He presented his view to the President that the current conduct to the war was failing, and a different approach which placed more emphasis on the South Vietnamese themselves was required.[108] President Johnson made the decision to bring GEN Westmoreland, the MACV commander of four years, home and replace him with GEN Abrams.[109]

The decision to place GEN Abrams in command of MACV signaled the transition to the last phase of the Vietnam War for U.S. forces. In this final stage the employment of U.S. military forces had come full circle. From bearing the brunt of combat missions in 1965 to 1968, U.S. forces would return to their pre-1965 role of supporting the South Vietnamese in doing their own fighting. The new policy was known as Vietnamization. It was established by the newly elected President Nixon who instructed GEN Abrams that henceforth the primary mission of U.S. forces would be to train the Vietnamese to shoulder the burden of their own defense.[110]

This marked the beginning of a gradual phase-out of U.S. military forces in Vietnam. Initially, ground forces began turning over their responsibilities to Vietnamese units. U.S. air and naval forces continued to support Vietnamese military units until the final withdrawal of U.S. forces in 1973. The U.S. continued and increased strategic bombing in an attempt to bring North Vietnam to the peace tables, and achieve a cease fire prior to the complete withdrawal of American troops. On 27 January 1973 the cease fire is signed in Paris; the last U.S. troops leave Vietnam two months later. For the next two years South Vietnam continued to defend itself against continued threats from the North, and from within the country without U.S. combat forces.[111]

Part IV - Conclusions

This section summarizes the preceding discussion and analyzes MACV's conduct of the operational art from 1965-1968. Although the operational art is complex and requires genius to plan and execute, its essence is quite simple. In terms of current doctrine, MACV's operations must meet two basic criteria to be considered operational art: 1. MACV's employment of military forces in Vietnam must have been linked to achieving strategic objectives, and 2. MACV's operational design in Vietnam must have synchronized and integrated military operations to achieve operational and strategic objectives. The following discussion considers each of these questions separately.

Was MACV's employment of military forces in Vietnam linked to achieving strategic objectives?

Although controversy surrounds U.S. strategic objectives in Vietnam, there is clear evidence that fairly well defined strategic objectives were established by U.S. policy makers prior to the introduction of American combat forces. As discussed in Part III, these objectives were to avoid general war with the USSR/PRC, to contain communism, to maintain faith in American foreign policy, and to help South Vietnam become politically and economically stable so it could stand on its own.

Although the military instrument of power had a role in each of these objectives, it was directly and actively involved in helping South Vietnam stand on its own. Military operations were to buy enough time for Vietnam achieve the political and economic stability required to stand as independent nation. In order to buy time, the military had to protect the population, infrastructure, and developing government from internal and external threats until they were no longer subject to such threats or could protect themselves. Success in Vietnam, within the limitations imposed, would support the other three U.S. strategic objectives. By succeeding in South Vietnam, MACV would have contributed to the overall strategic objectives of containment and faith in the U.S. By restraining its operations in

order to prevent widening of the war, MACV supported the objective of avoiding general war.

The commander of MACV understood the military's role in achieving strategic objectives. He defined his operational objectives as defending South Vietnam against large well organized threats, defending against smaller insurgent type threats like terrorists and guerrillas, and training the South Vietnamese to defend themselves. He employed military forces at the tactical level in two basic methods to achieve this end, 'search and destroy' and 'pacification'. Additionally, he continued the advisory program to assist and train the South Vietnamese armed forces. Each of these methods of employing military forces at the tactical level was intended to respectively address one of MACV's three operational objectives. Search and destroy operations were intended to prevent large organized enemy units from disrupting operations in South Vietnam or providing support to insurgents. Pacification was intended to eliminate the insurgent threat posed by guerrillas and terrorists and reestablish government control throughout South Vietnam. Advisors and training to the ARVN was intended to assist and prepare the South Vietnamese to defend themselves. Overall each of these tactical uses of U.S. combat troops directly supported a specific operational objective, which in turn directly supported the strategic objective of helping Vietnam stand on its own, and indirectly supported the other three U.S. strategic objectives.

The above discussion shows that a basic concept of linkage existed between strategic objectives and tactical employment of military forces. Although the existence of linkage is key to operational art, it does not alone constitute operational art. The second component of operational art requires that military operations be synchronized and integrated.

Did MACV's operational design in Vietnam synchronize and integrate military operations to achieve operational and strategic objectives.

While there is evidence of the presence of linkage in MACV's operations, there is little evidence to support the existence of synchronization and integration. This discussion

considers synchronization and integration on three different levels: the integration of battles and engagements in an overall major operation or campaign; the synchronization and integration between different operational military missions; and the strategic integration of military missions with other instruments of national power.

Battles and Engagements

The integration of battles and engagements to an overall major operation or campaign was neither well planned nor executed. Most battles and engagements in Vietnam took place as part of a collection of decentralized tactical operations rather than a centrally planned campaigns or major operations. MACV designated Corps zones and provided general guidance for area responsibilities. Units constructed base camps and patrolled locally to defeat enemy units and protect the population. With the exception of Operations Cedar Falls, Junction City, and a few other operations, there were minimal multi-division sequenced operations. MACV channeled information and missions to the corps, but did not centrally plan or coordinate their efforts of how the contribution of each corps would assist other corps, and ultimately accomplish the mission. Each corps zone conducted independent operations under the general guidelines for the employment of U.S. forces. The result was fragmented tactical operations that took place without a focused concept of how they related to one another.

Part of the reason for the decentralized execution was MACV's strategy of attrition. MACV adopted a strategy of attrition because traditional decisive battle was politically impossible. COMUSMACV, CINCPAC and the JCS all believed that North Vietnam was the root of the problem and should be attacked directly. They felt that beating the North was the key to winning. Political restrictions stemming from the fear of escalation precluded overt U.S. action against enemy forces in Laos and Cambodia, and limited actions against North Vietnam to strategic bombing carefully supervised by President Johnson.

Unable to strike decisively at the enemy, military leaders settled for next best thing, to wear the enemy down. MACV's plan was intended to wear out the enemy's ability to

make war by killing enemy personnel and destroying supplies more rapidly than they could be replenished. Strategic bombing would help support MACV by wearing down enemy will and inhibiting support to enemy military forces. This approach was attractive to the firepower based U.S. military as an alternative to decisive battle against North Vietnam.

The attrition strategy did not lend itself to a coherent campaign plan. It took the form of general guidance to subordinates, who in turn executed a series of independent tactical actions. Search and destroy tactics attempted to defeat the enemy when and where he could be found, and consequently ceded the initiative to the enemy. The attrition strategy allowed the enemy to choose when to fight and when not to. He could remain in sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia, protected by political restrictions, sojourning forth only when he was ready. To support the attrition strategy, U.S. forces had to detect these incursions and move combat forces there to destroy them. This did two things. First, it ceded the initiative to the enemy; the NVA/VC were able to determine where and when to fight, and they were able to recover from the shock of any losses they may have sustained. Second, it allowed the enemy to control his loss rates.

The attrition strategy relied on the ability of U.S. forces and the ARVN to destroy enemy forces and supplies more rapidly than they could be replenished. Because the enemy had the initiative, he could control the introduction of his forces into combat, and ensure that his losses never exceeded what he was willing to accept. Likewise, the enemy controlled when he would fight. U.S. forces were generally unsuccessful in 'bringing him to battle' unless he was willing. This meant the key operational decision of when and where to fight was frequently being determined by the enemy, and impaired MACV's ability to integrate planning and execution of campaigns and major operations.

MACV's strategy did not promote integration and synchronization of tactical actions. The strategy of attrition ceded the initiative to the enemy and condemned the U.S. to fight on the enemy's terms. The tactical actions of MACV's subordinate commands were not integrated into an overall campaign plan or concept for MACV's operations in South Vietnam. MACV did not centrally plan and direct operations. It required corps to

fight disparate operations which were not synchronized with other corps operations. Ultimately, MACV was unsuccessful in synchronizing and integrating tactical actions to achieve operational results.

Integration and Synchronization of Operational Objectives

MACV was attempting to accomplish three simultaneous operational objectives: to defeat large well organized enemy forces; to defeat smaller insurgent type forces; and to train the ARVN to defend South Vietnam from internal and external threats. It was necessary to accomplish all three missions simultaneously. To concentrate solely on small insurgent threats while ignoring large NVA/VC threats would have allowed the enemy to use large units to achieve victory through decisive battle. To concentrate on larger units at the expense of combating the insurgency would have would allow the enemy to continually weaken the country from the inside. This would adversely affect popular support of the government, moral of the armed forces, and the economy, all key in stabilizing South Vietnam. Failure to train the South Vietnamese to assume their own self-defense would be equally problematic. If the ARVN was incapable of securing South Vietnam, U.S. forces would be responsible to either eliminate all threats to the South, or maintain a sustained presence.

MACV was responsible to maintain a secure environment for other instruments of national power to stabilize Vietnam's government and economy. To do this, MACV would have to accomplish its three operational objectives simultaneously. MACV was formed to assist the Vietnamese in defending themselves. From the beginning, MACV focused on building a conventional force. MAAG was initially responsible for the advisory and assistance role in Vietnam. When MACV absorbed MAAG, it became responsible to accomplish advisory missions also, but it gave primary emphasis to combat missions. GEN Westmoreland was focused on the use of firepower to destroy large forces and the majority U.S. forces employed in Vietnam were organized and trained to accomplish this objective. Westmoreland felt that this would support his strategy of attrition by breaking the war-making capability of the North Vietnamese and denying support to insurgent forces.

Although U.S. forces were very successful in minimizing the effect that large enemy units had during the war, they did not place sufficient emphasis on dealing with the other two military objectives. This led to an unbalanced approach that successfully destroyed large units, but failed to defeat the insurgency or train the Vietnamese to conduct their own defense.

The U.S. attempts to eliminate the insurgent forces were only marginally effective. U.S. forces focused on large enemy units at the expense of training and organization for counterinsurgency. Additionally, the ARVN, who according to Westmoreland's plan had primary responsibility for counterinsurgency, was trained and equipped to mirror U.S. forces and therefore lacked the requisite skills to perform the counterinsurgency mission. The result was that while big units were kept away in order to allow for counterinsurgency operations, these operations were not effectively conducted. Guerrilla and terrorist threats were not significantly reduced and continued to weaken support for the government, cause discontent in the population, and harass security forces.

Concentrating on big units also placed training the ARVN at a low priority. The assumption of many combat missions by U.S. forces relegated the ARVN to a secondary role in the defense of their country and placed the primary burden of fighting on the U.S. It made training the ARVN a secondary consideration. GEN Westmoreland's declared strategy was responsible for this. Concentration by U.S. forces on large combat operations minimized the experience of ARVN units in such operations and damaged their morale. U.S. advisors remained in ARVN units, but concentrated primarily on pacification missions, and performed them using the standard American massive firepower approach. This meant that most ARVN units performed counterinsurgency using ineffective techniques that alienated the population, and gained minimal experience against larger threats like those they would face in 1972 and 1975. Ultimately, by 1968 ARVN units were unprepared to assume the primarily U.S. mission against larger units, and ineffective in counterinsurgency.

MACV did not have a good plan to integrate its three missions, defending against large units, pacification, and training the ARVN. MACV identified all three missions as

essential to satisfy operational objectives and allocated resources to accomplish them. What MACV lacked was a coherent plan which would synchronize and integrate these three efforts and give them equal priority. There was no coherent plan to progressively work from larger unit threats, to smaller units, guerrillas and terrorists, then to ultimately eradicate the threat, and at some point pass the baton to the South Vietnamese. The missions were essentially independent efforts which worked to satisfy independent objectives. Much like other U.S. tactical efforts, the actions were decentralized and accomplished by local commanders without an overall integrating strategy. Ultimately, MACV did a poor job of integrating its three major missions is a way that would achieve eventual success of each of the military objectives.

Integrating Instruments of National Power

MACV employed military forces to achieve operational objectives; however, those operational objectives alone could not satisfy all strategic objectives. Other instruments of national power had the lead role in achieving the overall strategic objectives. No single instrument of national power could alone achieve success in Vietnam. This meant that the use of military forces had to be closely integrated with the employment of other instruments of national power. Although operational art normally connotes the integration of military forces, it may require integration with other instruments of power to attain success and thereby achieve true linkage. The military instrument of power could not alone create a politically and economically stable Vietnam. That would take diplomatic, economic and informational powers. Diplomatic instruments were needed to build a stable responsive government and to garner support for the new republic in the world community. The economic instrument was required to strengthen the developing government, build infrastructure, develop export products, encourage industry, and guarantee loans.

The most significant contribution of the military instrument of power was to "buy time" to allow the other instruments of national power to build a stable government and a stable economy. The fledgling Vietnamese republic lacked experience in government, democratic tradition, and business. The French had not prepared South Vietnam to become

an independent country. It was necessary for military forces to prevent foreign intervention and minimize the threat from insurgency long enough for other U.S. agencies to make sufficient progress in these areas for South Vietnam to stand on its own. If the military could not provide a secure environment, other instruments of national power could not be successful in their missions.

While the military alone could not achieve strategic objectives, it could cause them to fail. MACV's strategy lacked an integrated plan to work with the other instruments of national power. Rather than a plan which defined support of overall strategic objectives and the other instruments of national power, MACV's strategy was focused on the battlefield success of destroying enemy forces, whether organized or insurgent. The MACV commander fought continually to have complete control of the pacification effort and a free hand in executing it. He battled with the ambassador and other government agencies to allow him to do things his own way rather than cooperate to use military forces in an integrated and synchronized effort with other instruments of national power. GEN Westmoreland's fixation on firepower and decisive battle led to a fixation on destroying the enemy. This caused him to lose lost sight of the strategic objective to save the whole country. GEN Westmoreland failed to maintain subordination of the military mission to the political object advised by Clausewitz over a century earlier: "If we keep in mind that war springs from some political purpose, it is natural that the prime cause of its existence will remain the supreme consideration in conducting it."[112]

The desire of MACV to wage an autonomous military campaign combined with the lack of a strong and well led U.S. strategy for success in Vietnam precluded an integrated application of the U.S. instruments of national power. Without strong leadership and or an integrated policy governing the use of U.S. instruments of power, the only way to achieve integration was through cooperation. Westmoreland failed to see the importance of an integrated approach, viewing the war as a military problem, and was unwilling to cooperate resulting in a lack of unity of effort. This resulted in different agencies working for the same overall aim, but pursuing independent courses of action. Failure to integrate

operational objectives with the actions of other government agencies led to a lack of synchronization in the effort to achieve strategic objectives through the employment of U.S. instruments of national power.

Summary

MACV did not adequately practice the operational art during the Vietnam War. Although MACV's tactical employment was generally linked to strategic objectives, the lack of synchronization and integration at the tactical, operational and strategic level preclude true application of the operational art. Although failure to practice the operational art may not have been solely responsible for the U.S. failing to achieve its strategic objectives in Vietnam, it was a significant contributing factor.

Joint Pub 3.0 reminds the reader that "Without operational art, war would be a set of disconnected engagements, with relative attrition the only measure of success or failure."[113] Vietnam is a vivid demonstration of this modern doctrinal tenet. It not only occurred in Vietnam, it was the pronounced strategy for the war from 1965-1968. Failure to properly synchronize and integrate at the tactical, operational and strategic levels made even the attempt at attrition unsuccessful and ensured operational military ineffectiveness. This monograph makes no attempt do suggest that the reason the U.S. lost the war in Vietnam was because of military failure to practice operational art. Although this was certainly a contributing factor, it was not the only cause of failure.

The major lesson learned from the practice of operational art in Vietnam is that conditions of that war bear similarity to many of the situations faced by the U.S. armed forces today. The preponderance of missions currently facing the U.S. military are wars and operations other than war dominated by unconventional warfare, low intensity conflict, peacekeeping, coalition warfare, and interagency operations. These bear more in common with Vietnam than they do with W.W.II, Korea or Desert Storm. Although the operational art was practiced in W.W.II, Korea and Desert Storm, it was arguably easier due to the nature of these conflicts. In Vietnam, it was considerably more difficult. The Vietnam War demonstrates the critical nature of the operational art when military force is employed to

achieve strategic objectives in limited war. Military professionals should continue to study the application of the operational art in Vietnam, because of the similarities to current operations, and the difficulty in applying operational art in such circumstances. Study of the failures in Vietnam may preclude another hiatus for the operational art.

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[1] US Army, FM 100-5, Operations, (Washington DC: USGPO, 1993), p. 1-1.

[2] Ibid., p. Glossary-6.

[3] Ibid., p. 2-4.

[4] Ibid., p Glossary-6.

[5] Joint Chiefs of Staff, JP 3-0, Doctrine for Joint Operations, (Washington DC: USGPO, 1993), p. GL-12.

[6] Carl von Clausewitz, On War, Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 88.

[7] JP 3-0, Doctrine for Joint Operations, p. II-6.

[8] FM 100-5, Operations, p. 6-2.

[9] JP 3-0, Doctrine for Joint Operations, p. II-3.

[10] Ibid., p. GL-14.

[11] Ibid., p. II-3.

[12] Ibid., p. GL-15.

[13] FM 100-5, Operations, pp. 1-3, 6-3.

[14] JP 3-0, Doctrine for Joint Operations, p. II-4.

[15] Ibid., pp. I-5 - I-7.

[16] Ibid., p. V-2.

[17] Ibid., p. V-3.

[18] Ibid., pp. V-5, A-2.

[19] Ibid., p. III-13.

[20] The American Heritage Electronic Dictionary III, (Cambridge, MA: Softkey International, Inc. 1994).

[21] Ibid.

[22] JP 3-0, Doctrine for Joint Operations, p. III-14.

[23] Ibid., p. GL-12.

[24] Ibid., p. III-7.

[25] Ibid., p. III-6.

[26] Ibid., p. III-10.

[27] Ibid., p. III-10.

[28] Ibid., p. III-22.

[29] Bruce Palmer Jr., The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam, (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc. 1984), p. 3.

[30] Bernard B. Fall, Street Without Joy, (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), pp. 22-31.

[31] Palmer, p. 6.

[32] Fall, pp. 312-329.

[33] Palmer, pp. 5-6.

[34] Ibid., p. 5.

[35] Ibid., p. 7.

[36] Stanley Karnow, Vietnam A History, The First Complete Account of Vietnam at War, (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), pp. 223-4.

[37] These four strategic objectives are synthesized from several different primary sources. They were never specifically stated in the exact verbiage used in the text of the monograph, although basic theme remains the same. The first source is President Johnson's address at Johns Hopkins University on 7 April 1965, concerning our purpose and objective for committing US combat troops in 1965, and the second, the White House Declaration of 8 February 1966, Signed the by President Johnson and the president of Vietnam. These two documents are found in: Steven Cohen, Vietnam, Anthology and Guide to a Television History, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), pp. 108-112, 135-137. Two additional sources include defense department memorandums recommending introduction of U.S. troops to protect U.S. interests. The first memorandum is from the Secretary of Defense in March 1964, and the second from the assistant Secretary of Defense in November 1964. These two documents are contained in an extract of The Pentagon

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[39] John Pimlott, Vietnam, The Decisive Battles, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990), p. 27.

[40] Richard J. Barnet, "The American Responsibility," The Vietnam Reader, edited by Marcus G. Raskin and Bernard B. Fall, (New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 45-52.

[41] Pimlott, p. 27.

[42] The White House, A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement, (Washington DC: USGPO, 1994), pp. 6-8.

[43] A.J. Bacevich, The Pentomic Era, The U.S. Army Between Korea and Vietnam, (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1986), pp. 20-29, 53-56.

[44] Palmer, p. 7.

[45] Ibid., p. 6.

[46] Karnow, pp. 223-4.

[47] Ibid., pp. 230-9; Palmer, pp. 8-10.

[48] Don R. and Authur Larson, "What Is Our 'Commitment' in Viet-Nam?," The Vietnam Reader, pp. 99-101.

[49] Barnet, The Vietnam Reader, pp. 45-52.

[50] Palmer, p. 42.

[51] Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr. The Army and Vietnam, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p 155.

[52] Ibid., pp. 18-21.

[53] Ibid., pp. 24-26

[54] Fall, p. 346.

[55] William C. Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1976), p. 57.

[56] Palmer, pp. 30-31.

[57] Initially, the major threat to the South Vietnamese government was from small insurgent forces. Their primary mission was to undermine confidence in the Diem government in order to sway the 1956 unification referendum in favor of the North. Following President Diem's refusal to participate in the reunification referendum, the North Vietnamese stepped up their attacks on the government of the South. See Douglas Pike, PAVN, Peoples Army of Vietnam, (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc. 1986), pp. 42-47; and Karnow, pp. 219-227. In 1957, 37 armed companies were organized in the South. By 1961, the People's Liberation Army (PLAF) had organized its first two battalions, officered by North Vietnamese cadres. By 1963, PLAF forces had grown to three regiments. See Pike, pp. 44-45. In addition to insurgent forces, South Vietnam also faced a substantial conventional threat from North Vietnam whose armed forces consisted of "215,000 men in six infantry divisions, an artillery division, five infantry brigades, and ten independent regiments." See Ken Conboy, Ken Bowra, and Simon McCouaig, The NVA and Viet Cong, (London: Osprey Publishing Ltd. 1991), p. 9.

The U.S. approach to deal with the threats faced by the RVN was to build a strong conventional army. The ARVN was designed in the image of U.S. units, and intended to be capable of defending the country against a conventional cross border attack similar to the Korean scenario. See Krepinevich, pp. 56-65. The U.S. trained and equipped the roughly 200,000 man ARVN to fight a conventional war. The counter-insurgentists, the school of thought that claims Vietnam was lost by failing to properly fight the insurgency, have grossly criticized this policy for focusing on conventional threats at the expense of the insurgent threat.

The Diem government, assisted by U.S. advisors, used a combination two basic approaches to combat the insurgency. The first was the "strategic hamlet" program, and the second was a three-phased MAAG plan for progressively securing static areas. The strategic hamlet program was modeled after the British approach in Malaysia and involved clearing areas of Viet Cong (VC), then building small enclaves and relocating rural villages to the new enclaves. The program was poorly executed, and corruption, lack of popular support and infiltration by the VC led it to be ineffective. See Pimlott, p. 30.

The MAAG plan called for a three-phase plan to sequentially begin by clearing areas within South Vietnam. The three phases involved training cadres and making "political and economic reforms," "secure and hold operations," and then long term security to retain cleared areas. The operations were sequenced to begin with the six provinces around the capital, then the Mekong Delta and Central Highlands, and lastly other rural areas. See Krepinevich, p. 66. The program progressed generally as planned with several major operations, Operations Sunrise, Switchback and Hop Tac. Unfortunately these operations were largely unsuccessful due to lack of popular support for the government, corruption, insufficient forces, and increased support and infiltration from North Vietnam.

[58] Krepinevich, pp. 56-65.

[59] Palmer, p. 11.

[60] Westmoreland, pp. 99-101, 137.

[61] Admiral U.S.G. Sharp and General W.C. Westmoreland, Report on the Vietnam War (As of 30 June 1968), (Washington DC: USGPO, 1968), p. 95.

[62] Westmoreland, pp. 126-127.

[63] Mark Perry, Four Stars, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), pp. 137-151.

[64] Westmoreland, pp. 76, 119-120.

[65] Karnow, p. 435; Krepinevich, p. 165.

[66] Karnow, pp. 436-439.

[67] Ibid., pp. 415, 454.

[68] Krepinevich, p. 141.

[69] Ibid., p. 151.

[70] Report on the Vietnam War (As of 30 June 1968), p. 100.

[71] Ibid., pp. 275-278.

[72] Ibid., pp. 275-278.

[73] Krepinevich, pp. 145-149.

[74] Perry, p. 159.

[75] Ibid., pp. 146-162.

[76] The "Ho Chi Minh Trail" was not a single route; rather it was a network of trails, waterways and highways that ran from North Vietnam, through Laos and Cambodia, and into South Vietnam. See Pimlott, p. 158, and Harry Summers, The Vietnam War Almanac, (New York: Facts On File Publications, 1985), pp. 196-197.

[77] Palmer, p. 37.

[78] Westmoreland, p. 145; and Krepinevich, p. 165.

Endnotes (Continued)

[79] Krepinevich, p. 155.

[80] Westmoreland, p. 152.

[81] Ibid., pp. 154-155.

[82] Jack E. Pattison, "Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue: The Marriage of Strategy and Tactics in Vietnam," School of Advanced Military Studies Monograph, (Fort Leavenworth: USCGSC, 1989), pp. 18-30.

[83] MACV did plan several multi-division phased incursions into Laos and Cambodia which were never executed. See Westmoreland, pp. 271-273.

[84] Corps headquarters were not actually called "corps" for political reasons. GEN Westmoreland decided to call them "field forces" to emphasize that they were supporting the Vietnamese corps and to avoid confusion. Ibid., p. 155. Also see Pattison, p. 23.

[85] Palmer, pp. 59-60.

[86] Krepinevich, pp. 164-168.

[87] Karnow, pp. 454-455.

[88] Westmoreland, p. 76.

[89] Summers, pp. 188-189.

[90] Report on the Vietnam War (As of 30 June 1968), p 229.

[91] Westmoreland, p. 216.

[92] Ibid., p. 146.

[93] Ibid., p. 68.

[94] Ibid., p. 68.

[95] Ibid., p. 210.

[96] Ibid., p. 211.

[97] Ibid., pp. 210-215.

[98] Ibid., p. 161.

[99] Ibid., p. 161.

[100] Ibid., pp. 213-215.

[101] Ibid., pp. 145-146.

[102] Ibid., pp. 221-222.

[103] Palmer, pp. 57-58.

[104] Krepinevich, p. 248.

[105] Report on the Vietnam War (As of 30 June 1968), p. 168.

[106] Perry, pp. 190-192 and Medio Vietnam Multimedia CD-ROM, "Message from General Wheeler to all Pacific Commanders, March 30, 1968."

[107] Perry, pp. 190-192.

[108] Ibid., pp. 192-193.

[109] Ibid., p. 193.

[110] Medio Vietnam Multimedia CD-ROM, "Nixon: Vietnamization will Shorten the War." Speech delivered on national television on November 3, 1969.

[111] For the next two years South Vietnam continued to defend itself against continued threats from the North, and from within the country without U.S. combat forces. Despite the absence of American military assistance, the U.S. had left massive stockpiles of weapons and materiel. South Vietnam's continued fighting rapidly consumed these stocks, leaving them at parity with the communists. The political climate in the U.S. did not allow for the expenditure of additional money or support to the government of South Vietnam. The situation in the South continued to decay, with increasing desertions from the ARVN and growing dissatisfaction in the government. In January 1975 the North launched the assault they had been preparing for six months. South Vietnamese city after city fell before the conventional assault until on 30 April North Vietnamese tanks smashed through the gates of the Presidential palace in Saigon. See Pimlott, pp. 180-187. The war was over, and the United States had failed to achieve all but one of its strategic objectives. Vietnam had fallen, communism was not contained, and global faith the U.S. was shaken, but the war never escalated to general war with the USSR or PRC.

[112] Clausewitz, p. 87.

[113] JP 3-0, Doctrine for Joint Operations, p. II-3.